

THE
Danger of Priestcraft

TO
Religion and Government:

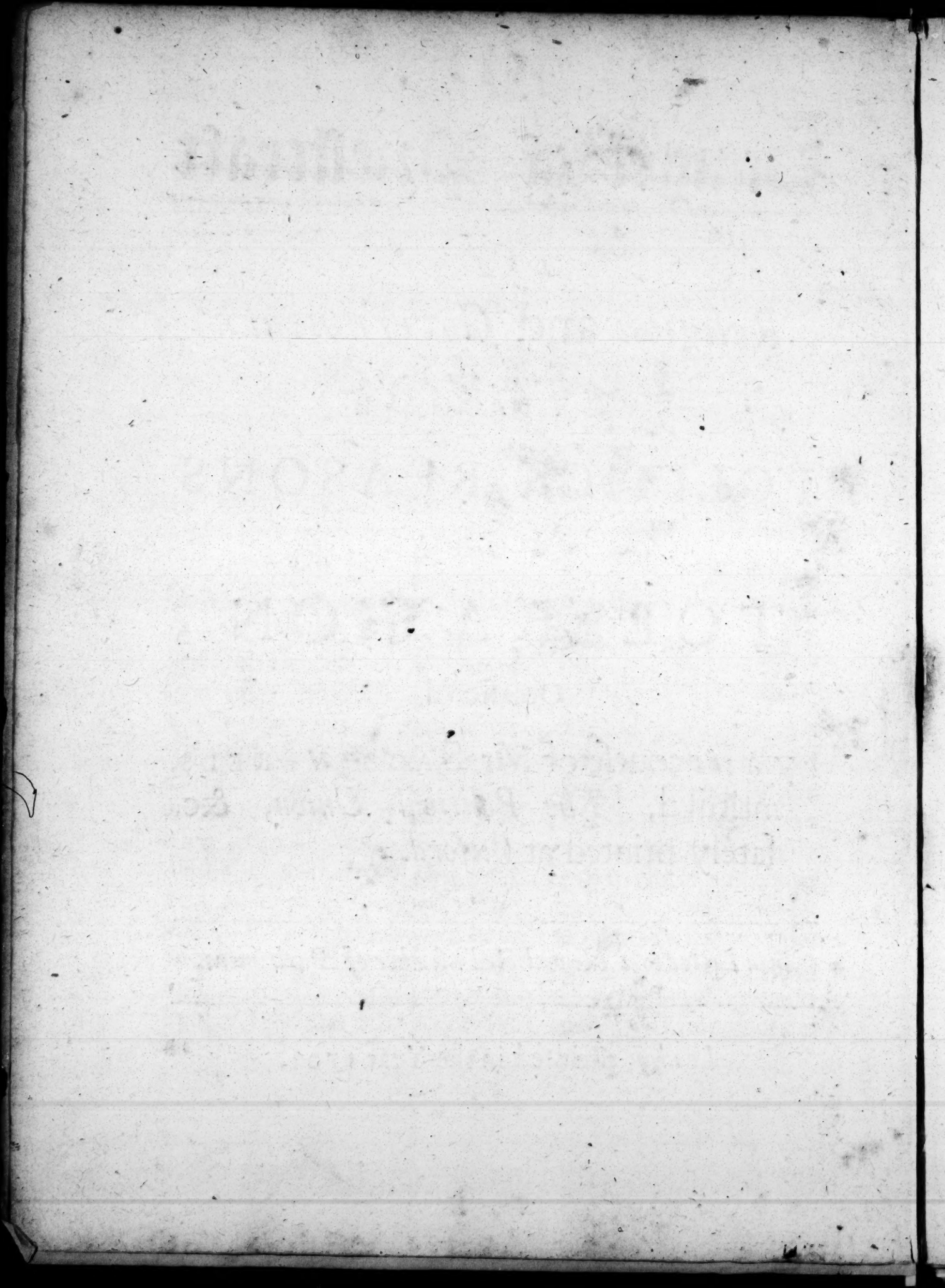
WITH SOME
POLITICK REASONS
FOR
TOLERATION.

Occasion'd

By a Discourse of Mr. SACHEVEREL'S,
intitul'd, *The Political Union, &c.*
lately printed at Oxford.

In a Letter to a New-elected Member of Parliament.

London, Printed in the Year 1702.



A
LETTER, &c.

S I R,

YOUR Friends in this Place rejoiced at the News of your Election, not so much out of Love to you as to their Country. We applauded the Happiness or Wisdom of your Electors, who at a time when *England* is so much in danger, made choice of a Member to serve it in Parliament, who so truly loves it, and so thoroughly understands its Interest; who has Sense enough to know that *English* Principles alone can make an *Englishman*, and to contemn the unthinking Crowd, who prefer the Name to the Thing; who knows that he is most an *Englishman*, who does most for *England's* Happiness; and who prefers a Foreigner that endeavours to support it, before an *Englishman* that attempts to enslave it; and esteems one who was born a *Dutchman*, or perhaps a *German*, but is become an *Englishman*, before one who was born indeed

an *Englishman*, but is become an Errant *Frenchman*. For every Honest and Brave Man will love an Honest and Brave Man, and hate a Knave and a Coward, which every Traitor to his Country is.

No Man knows better than your self the Nature and End of the Trust reposed in you; that Senators are sent up to the Great Council to preserve the Properties of those who sent them; which is the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the Original and End of Government: that nothing can rightly come within the Compass of your Debates, but what has a relation to that Care; and that to do any thing contrary to it is to betray the Trust reposed in you. No Man is more fully convinc'd that the Properties of the People of *England* are now in the utmost Danger, both from a formidable Enemy abroad, and from a restless Party at home. No Man consequently can be more satisfied, that it is your Duty to do all that lies in your power to enable her Majesty to resist the Foreign Force that would conquer us, and the Domestick Arts of those who by sowing Divisions among us, would render us an easy Prey to the Conqueror.

As some among us would sell us for Money, so others would barter us for Dominion, and a third sort, who are the Tools of the former, would betray us out of Conscience. But the Artifices of no sort of Men are so dangerous, as of those who pretend them sacred, and would make them pass upon the Minds of Men for Religion.

Such seems to me to be the Intention of a Book, which was lately published at *Oxford*, and licens'd by the Vice Chancellor of that University, call'd, *The Political*

litical Union; which is manifestly writ with a design to take off the Act of Toleration, and to advance the Temporal Power of the Church, which would not fail to divide and weaken us more and more, and make our Condition desperate.

The Discourse is founded upon a Text in the 8th of *Proverbs* and the 15th, *By me Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice*. From which the Author has drawn this following Proposition, which is the Subject Matter of his Pamphlet.

“ That Religion is the Grand Support of Government; that the Peace, Happiness and Prosperity of the Secular and Civil Power depends upon that of the Spiritual and Ecclesiastical.

In all my Life time I never met with any Discourse that was writ with less Religion and less Good-manners, or with more Sophistry or more Malice; tho indeed he has taken pretty good care to moderate its Venom by Dulness, as those who make *Venus Treacle* are wont to temper Vipers with *Opium*.

But that we may discover the Sophistry of the whole Discourse more clearly, let us divide this Proposition into the following Branches.

First, Religion is the Grand Support of Government.
Secondly, The Peace, Happiness and Prosperity of the Secular Power depend upon that of the Spiritual and Ecclesiastical.

First, Religion is the Grand Support of Government.
 Where by Religion may be meant two things.

1. Religion it self, and the Power it has over the Minds of Men.

2. Priestcraft ; which comprehends all that the Arts of designing Men cause to pass for Religion with the unthinking part of the World, tho it is neither dictated by the Law of Nature, nor included in the Written Word. And here we shall shew that Religion taken in the first Sense is the Support of Government ; but that taken in the latter it necessarily tends to the utter Subversion of it.

1. Religion, and the Power that it has o'er the Minds of Men, is the Support of Government. For without the Observance of Moral Virtue there can be no Government, and Moral Virtue is undeniably Religion. But now if Government depends on Religion, what sort of Religion must that Person have, who endeavours at such a Juncture as this to set three Nations all in Confusion, and to bring all things to Anarchy ? Or whether is He a more able Statesman, who makes it his business to foment the Divisions of a People engag'd in a War with a very potent Enemy ; or a more pious Churchman, who goes about to extinguish the Remains of Charity that are in the Minds of Christians ? But,

2. Priestcraft is destructive to Government. And that we may make this the more plain to the Reader, let us explain a little farther what we mean by Priestcraft. Priestcraft is an Art by which Designing Men, in order to their own advantage, make that pass for Religion upon the unthinking part of the World, that is neither dictated by the Law of Nature, nor included in the written Religion of the Country. From which it follows that that must needs be Priestcraft with a vengeance, that would make
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any thing pass for Religion which is contrary to the Law of Nature, or to the Precepts or Design of written Religion. Now the chief Virtues of the Christian Religion are Charity, Humility, Meekness, Peace-making, Mercy : so that among Christian Priests every Doctrine is Priestcraft that is repugnant to these. All then that favours of Persecution, is Priestcraft ; because it is contrary to Humility, to Meekness, to Mercy, to Peace-making, and above all to Charity ; for the want of which no other part of Religion, no not the abundance of Faith it self, is able to make amends. All that the Clergy do to advance their Temporal Greatness is Priestcraft ; because that is contrary to Humility, Meekness and Purity, and consequently such Priestcraft is destructive to Government. For if Government depends on Religion, then any thing that does hurt to the latter must do it to the former. But nothing does more hurt to Religion than Priestcraft, because this alone makes more Atheists than any thing in the world besides : For many People are apt to imagine that there can be nothing in Religion, when they see that the Priests who are most conversant in it, make it a mere Pretext. And more particularly I believe that Priestcraft has done more harm to the Christian Religion even than open Immorality. For what reason can be given why Deism and avowed Atheism should be more propagated since the establishing of the true Religion than ever they were before, unless it be this, that perhaps there has been more Priestcraft in it than ever there has been in any other Religion ? But further, when Mr. S. says that Religion is the Support of Government, he means either Religion in general, or only the True Religion. If he means Religion in general, can any thing be more absurd than to write a Book
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for the proving of that which never any one was stupid enough to deny? For as far back as History reaches, there is no mention of any Government without a National Religion, which shews the Sense of Mankind in the case. But now at this rate what occasion can there be for persecuting, or for the Magistrates tolerating only one Religion, when it is plain that Government is supported by all? But if Mr. S. means that Government is supported only by the True Religion, he manifestly errs, because Experience tells us, that several Governments flourish at this present time in the World under the Pagan and *Mahometan*, as well as under the Christian Religion.

But if Mr. S. means that Government is best supported by the true Religion, we grant it; but even that may serve to shew the Folly and the Danger of Priestcraft. For if Government depends on Religion, and the Christian Religion hath seen more Divisions, more Confusions, and more Civil Wars in the Nations in which it has been established, than ever any Religion did before; why then it follows, that if it is the best of Religions, it has had the worst of Priests.

The Design of Christianity is certainly to unite Mankind more closely; but some crafty Persons who have made that their Pretence, and secular Interest and Power their Business, have been industrious to wrest it from its pure Intention, and have made use of it to sow fatal Divisions in Kingdoms and Commonwealths; Divisions contrary to their private Happiness, their Political Safety, and to the Intention of that very Religion which is made the Pretence for supporting them.

For what can be the Reason that the Christian Religion, whose Design is Union, has been made use of to sow
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more Divisions and more Dissensions in the Nations in which it has been establish'd, than ever the Pagan Religion did among the antient *Romans*; but because too many of the Christian Priests interfere with Government, which the *Romans* were by much too wise to permit to theirs?

But further, let us ask Mr. S. If the Civil Government is best supported by the True Religion, which is the True Religion; the Christian Religion in general, or any particular Branch of it, as for example, that which is call'd the Church of *England*? If the Christian Religion in general be the True Religion, then why should any Branch of it be refus'd to be tolerated? But if only the Church of *England* be the True Religion, I would fain ask Mr. S. if a Christian can be sav'd in no other Branch of the Christian Religion? And if he answers, that that can be done, I would ask him if that Religion can be false which procures the Salvation of Souls; or if that Religion which procures the Salvation of Souls, and consequently is acceptable and agreeable to God, ought to Men to be odious and intolerable? But if Mr. S. affirms that no one can be sav'd out of the Church of *England*; I must ask him once more, in which of the Churches of *England* a Man may be sav'd, that I may know in which he must be damn'd? Mr. S. would oblige me by telling me which is the false Church of *England*. For since he tells us, *Pag. 61.* that there is a true Church of *England*, it follows necessarily that there must be a false one. Now which is the true, and which is the false one? or which is the True, and which is the False Priesthood? For we may know the Flock by the Pastors. Is that the True that neglects and forsakes the Gospel for a foolish little Secular Greatness; that is lost in Covetousness, and the Desire of Power, the Lust of the Flesh,

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and the Pride of Life ; who tho our Saviour commanded his Apostles not to take two Coats, *Mat. 10. 10.* will be satisfied each of them with no less than four Benefices, and who have nothing that is Apostolical in them, but the calling for Fire from Heaven, like *James* and *John*, upon those who will not receive them ; who breathe forth nothing but Rage and Malice, and the Fury of Persecution ? Is this the True, the Christian Catholick Priesthood ? No, these are so many Antichrists, if we will believe *St. John*, *Epist. 1. ch. 2. v. 22.* *Who is a Liar, but he who denieth that Jesus is the Christ ? He is Antichrist who denieth the Father and the Son.* Now no Man denies the Saviour of the World so effectually as by his Works : *St. Peter* denied him in Words, and yet believed in him ; but he who denies him by his Works, denies him from his very Heart. Now he denies him by his Works the most effectually, whose Works shew least of Charity. *In this (says St. John in Epist. 1. ch. 3. v. 10.) the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil : Whosoever doth not Righteousness is not of God, neither he who loveth not his Brother.*

If the Church of *England* is the True Religion, that sure must be its true, its Catholick Priesthood, those Moderate, Humble, Peace-making, Merciful Men, who breathe forth nothing but Charity ; who neglect all Worldly Greatness to bear their Master's Yoke, and who have learnt of him to be meek and lowly in Heart ; who are hearty Foes to Division only, and faithful constant Friends to Peace and Union. These are the True Sons of the Church, to use *Mr. S's* Expression. For since the very Spirit and Soul of the Christian Religion is the Spirit of Union and Charity, and the Spirit of Division is by consequence the Spirit of Malice and of the Devil ; the True Son of the Church

Church is he who appears the most for Union: and a wise Man may in this case find out the Child by the same Method, by which in another *Solomon* so sagaciously found out the Mother. For as she was the true Mother who was not for dividing the Child, he is certainly the true Child who is least for dividing the Mother.

If then the best Religion only ought to be tolerated, and the Church of *England* is the best Religion, and the True Church of *England*, to use Mr. S's Expression, is only properly the Church; and the moderate part of that Church be only the true Church, as we have endeavoured to shew: and if that violent Party which calls it self the Church of *England*, differs from the moderate Party more than any other Dissenters, because they are at a greater distance from Charity than any other Dissenters; why then if Toleration is taken away, it follows that of all the Dissenters from the True Church, the violent part of the Church of *England* ought the least to be tolerated.

By which, Sir, it appears that Mr. S. has been making a Rod for himself. For if only the True Church of *England* is to remain, and the moderate Church of *England* be the True Church of *England*; if the most violent ought the least to be tolerated, because they are the most repugnant to Charity, and consequently are the most enclining to disturb the Publick; why then it evidently follows that Mr. S. who is the most violent even of the Violent, ought never to be endur'd in a well-order'd State.

For can any thing be more opposite to the Spirit of Christianity, than either his Design, or his manner of handling it? Is not his Design apparently to set three Nations at variance? Does not his Stile shew a furious Zealot bent upon embroiling the World? Has he not treated the Dissenters
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and those of the Church with equal Rancour and Venom? Does he not use these well-manner'd and well-natur'd Expressions to the latter, viz. *False and perfidious Members, shuffling treacherous Latitudinarians, Sots and Bigots, Apostates and Renegadoes, false Traitors, crafty, faithless, insidious Persons*; while the gentlest Terms he uses to the others are, *Villains, Swarm of Sectaries, Robbers, Vipers, Boars, Beasts, Devils, Traitors, Bastard Spawn of a Popish Party, Propagators of Schism, and Panders of a cursed Train, Sharers in Villany and Rebellion*. Is this the Stile of a Christian? Is this the Language of Charity, that never yet was known to revile upon the most provoking Trials? The Spirit of the Gospel would have taught him another Strain. The Evangelists never used any Invective against Judas, Pilate, or any of the Enemies or Executioners of Christ. And St. Jude tells us in his Epistle, That, Michael the Archangel, when contending with the Devil he disputed about the Body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing Accusation, but said, *The Lord rebuke thee*.

But, Sir, I begin to apprehend, that I shall tire your Patience, and therefore it is high time to proceed to the consideration of the second Branch of Mr. S's Proposition, which follows.

The Peace, Happiness, and Prosperity of the Secular Power depends upon that of the Spiritual and Ecclesiastical.

Where we shall enquire,

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First, What is meant by the Secular Power, and its Peace and Prosperity. I mean what is meant among us ; for it will be necessary to apply things, and bring them home to our selves.

Secondly, What is meant by the Spiritual and Ecclesiastical Power, and its Peace and Prosperity.

Thirdly, How far the former is dependant on the latter.

First, By the Secular Power among us may be meant,

1. Either the whole Legislative Power, including the King, the Lords, and the Commons, who have Power by the Consent of the People to enact such Laws as may augment their Strength, and defend and secure their Properties. Or by the Secular Power may be meant,

2. The Executive Power alone, or the Power which is lodg'd in the hands of the Sovereign by the Consent of the People, in order to a due Execution of the Laws which are made for the securing their Properties.

3. By the Peace and Prosperity of the Legislative Power can be meant nothing but the successful obtaining the End for which they assemble, which is the securing of Property.

4. By the Peace and Prosperity of the Executive Power, separate and distinct from the Legislative, can be meant nothing but an augmentation of Power, or a Power beyond what is given by Law and the Consent of the People, and the Enjoyment of that Power unmolested and undisturb'd.

Secondly, What may be meant by the Spiritual and Ecclesiastical Power, and its Peace and Prosperity.

1. By the Spiritual Power, and its Peace and Prosperity, may be meant the flourishing of Religion in the World,
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and the prevailing Influence it has over the Minds of Men, and its exertion of that Influence unmolested and undisturb'd.

2. By the Ecclesiastical Power, as oppos'd to Spiritual, and its Peace and Prosperity, may be meant a Power to do more than is allow'd by Religion, and the Enjoyment of that Power unmolested and undisturb'd.

Thirdly, Let us now shew the Dependence that the Peace and Prosperity of the Civil Power has upon that of the Spiritual and Ecclesiastical.

1. The Peace and Prosperity of the Legislative Power does depend upon the Peace and Prosperity of the Spiritual Power oppos'd to the Ecclesiastical; that is, it depends upon the flourishing of Religion in the World, and the prevailing Influence it has o'er the Minds of Men.

We have taken notice above that the Peace and Prosperity of the Legislative Power means nothing but the successful obtaining the End for which they assemble, which is the securing the Properties of the People. So that in short, the Prosperity of the Legislative Power supposes the flourishing of the People who are the Fountain of it. Now the more prevalent Religion is upon the Minds of a People, the more will the People flourish; for the more Religion prevails, the more will the Rules of Justice be kept inviolate, the more will Peace and Union among them be strengthened; and by consequence, the more secure will they be from the encroaching Attempts of each other, and the stronger to repel any foreign Force. But from hence it follows that,

2. The Peace and Prosperity of the Legislative Power, and by consequence of the whole Body of the People, does

does not depend upon that of the Ecclesiastical Power, as it is oppos'd to the Spiritual. Where by Ecclesiastical Power, I mean the Power of enslaving the Conscience, by inflicting Temporal Penalties. For the Clergy, by that Power which they have not from Religion, and which is therefore Secular; by the Usurpation, I say, of such a Power, they promote Libertinism and Atheistical Principles, and do a great deal of harm to Religion; and so by weakning that which strengthens it, weaken the Legislative Power. Besides, the Clergy by the Usurpation of such a Power, not only encroach upon the Legislative, but run counter to it. For the Legislative Power is plac'd in such and such hands by the Consent of the People, in order to the maintaining or augmenting the Publick Strength, and the securing every Man's Property, as long as he does no harm to the Publick, or to particular Persons. But the Clergy, by the Usurpation of this Temporal Power, invade the Properties of innocent People, and by exasperating the Minds of the Sufferers, divide and weaken the Publick Strength.

Besides, the Power which the Clergy have of Persecuting, must be deriv'd from the Whole or a Part of the Legislative. If they derive it only from a Part against the Consent of the rest, why then they divide and weaken the Legislative. If they derive it from the Consent of the Whole, why then the Legislative betrays the Trust which the People repos'd in them, and run counter to the very End of Government, which is the securing of Property, and by so doing destroyeth it self. For this is plain, that wherever there is Persecution, Property cannot be secure. For since Faith or Belief is not in a Man's power, how can any Man be secure of Property in a Nation where he may lose it to morrow, for no other reason than for not believing what he cannot believe? But, 3. The

3. The Peace and Prosperity of the Executive Power, as it has a distinct and separate Interest from that of the Legislative, neither does nor can depend upon the Prosperity of the Spiritual Power, that is, upon the flourishing Force of Religion. For the Power we speak of is a Power beyond what is allow'd by Law, and the Consent of the People. Now the more Virtuous and the more Religious any People are, the less that People are in danger of Arbitrary Power. 'Tis want of Virtue that makes Men factious, and nothing but Faction can make any one Arbitrary. For then a Sovereign grows Arbitrary, when a part of his Subjects, on account of their own mistaken Interest, or violent Resentment, betray the Rights of the rest. But,

4. The Peace and Prosperity of the Executive Power, take it upon a distinct and separate Interest from that of the Legislative, does often depend upon the Prosperity of the Ecclesiastical Power; that is to say, the Arbitrary and Tyrannical Power of the Prince depends upon the illegal impious Power of the Priesthood. All Government is certainly both for and from the People, who first entred into Civil Society for the defence of their Rights. How then came the People ever to give up those Rights, which we see they have often done, and to depend upon the Arbitrary Will of their Governors, since it is contrary to the very End for which they entred into Society, and does not fail to bring them into a worse Condition than the State of Nature? Why the common Method by which Princes obtain unlimited Power, is this: They prevail upon the corrupt part of the Clergy to trump up those wretched abominable Doctrines of *Jus Divinum*, Non-resistance, and Passive Obedience upon the People; which is as much as to tell them, that if their Sovereign Lord and Master, who is
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Absolute and Independant, and accountable to none but God, will at any time graciously condescend to do them the honour to lie with any of their Wives or Daughters, they ought most obsequiously to hold the Door, because he has the Power of doing what he pleases from a Right Divine. But if any Man asks this Question, How comes it that the Clergy, who are a part of the Collective Body of the People, should be instrumental in making their Princes Arbitrary, since in the Peoples Rights they give up their own? I answer, that the Clergy are not such Fools, but that in giving up the Peoples Rights they always except their own: Nay, not only that, but in lieu of the Power they convey to the King which he has not by Law, they never fail to stipulate a Power for themselves which they have not by Gospel. If any Man will but cast his eye over the different Countries of *Europe*, he will find that in most Dominions where Arbitrary Power prevails, the Temporal Power of the Clergy is great; nay, so great, that at the same time that they support a Power in their Kings of cutting the Throats of their People, they reserve to themselves the Privilege of cutting the Throats of their Kings.

But if at any time it should happen, which I hope never will, but which yet is not impossible, that any part of the *English* Clergy should prove so corrupt, as to enter into the same Measures which divers of them did in some former Reigns, into Measures that had like to have prov'd so fatal to our Constitution, and which, if they should now be taken, are likely to prove more fatal than ever; I desire them to consider, that they have not Empire enough over the Minds of Men to make their Princes Arbitrary, tho perhaps they may have Credit enough to

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throw us into fatal Divisions, and subject us to a foreign Power. One of our former Princes was very sensible of this, and therefore at the same time that some of the Clergy of the Church of *England* were endeavouring with all their Might to make him absolute and independant, by preaching up Passive Obedience, Non-resistance, and *Jus Divinum* upon the People, He, who knew the World very well, and was convinc'd that they had not Authority over the Consciences and Minds of his Subjects sufficient to do his business, was undermining them all the while, and introducing the *Romish* Clergy. For if he grew absolute, He did not care by what Religion, having more of the Tyrant in his Humour than the Saint. Those whom he undermin'd, his Successor assaulted openly, as little knowing of what Spirit they were. What was the Event? Why, as soon as they saw that the Arbitrary Power which they had been helping him and his Predecessor to, extended it self to them; that not only Toleration was set up, and consequently all their Ambition mortified, and their Temporal Power thrown down, but that they were fallen into the Snare which themselves had laid; that their Properties and their Privileges were become a Prey to that unbounded Power which they had design'd to swallow the Peoples; why then to the amazement of all the World, they began to speak a Language which they had never been taught, and to cry out aloud, that the King had broken the Contract which he had made with the People; meaning at the same time the implicit Compact which he had made with themselves.

Thus, Sir, have I dissected this Sophister's Proposition, and endeavour'd to shew the Benefit of Religion to Government, and the Mischief of Priestcraft. For my own part,

part, Sir, at the same time I am not at all alarm'd about keeping up the Toleration. The Queen has given her Word for maintaining it, which I have no reason to mistrust, because I never knew that she broke it. However, if I am not mis-inform'd, there are Persons besides Mr. S. who are preparing to have a throw at it, and to do their utmost Endeavours to take it away, the very Attempt whereof is at present the most horrible Wickedness that can be conceiv'd, and the most dangerous to Church and State. For the effecting of it would necessarily have these Consequences: It would weaken the *English* Nation among themselves, and by fomenting the Divisions among us, and exasperating the Minds of the Parties; make us the less able to carry on the War against the Enemy of *Europe*. For a Body that is in Convulsions, when it is about to engage, will be more likely to fall foul on it self than to beat the Enemy.

As the effecting of this Design would weaken the *English*, so in all likelihood it would quite alienate the *Scots* from us: It would make them believe they have been abus'd and laugh'd at, and the Union from that time would become a general Jest. Now of what consequence the alienating of the Spirits of the *Scots* at such a juncture as this might be to the Common Interest, I leave to be determin'd by those who have the Management of publick Affairs.

As the bringing about this Design would weaken the two Nations by dividing them among themselves and from one another, it would lessen the Queen's Reputation at home, and her Credit abroad. For after she had broken her Word with her Subjects in a Case of the highest Importance, how could any of the Allies rely upon it, when she gives

gives it to them only on the behalf of her Subjects? And this Consideration makes this Attempt as extremely foolish as it is impudently wicked, because all who have any knowledg of the Queen know it will be absolutely impossible.

Besides, should they effect this Design, they must resolve either to maintain Persecution, or to let it fall again. If they resolve to let it fall again, they will provoke their Enemies to no purpose, and render themselves ridiculous. If they resolve to carry it on, they must at the same time determine to break thro the Act of Settlement: Because they know very well that if ever the House of *Hanover* should come, they would infallibly deliver the Nation from so grievous a Burden.

But let us now shew the Folly and Wickedness of this Attempt, by discovering the Mischief which the effecting it would bring to the Church it self. We have said before, that to maintain Persecution they must break through the Act of Settlement, an Act which is the Security of this Nation, and of the Liberties of *Europe*. What may we reasonably believe would follow? Why the next Successor would be introduc'd by Men of Arbitrary Principles: For who but Men of such Principles would break through such an Act? Now Men of Arbitrary Principles will certainly be for securing their Persons and their Power. But the only way for Men who act like them, to secure both, will be to make their new Monarch as Arbitrary as they can. Well then! they will make use of any Method that will best conduce to that; and consequently of any Religion. But the *Romish* Religion will be of more use to them in the accomplishment of their Designs than the Reformed can be, for Reasons too well known to be inserted here; and

and therefore to compass it they will set up Toleration anew, and expose the Church to the united Fury of Papists and Dissenters, and its too easy Clergy to the just derision of the Reformed Churches abroad.

However visionary these Notions may seem to the violent part of the Clergy of the Church of *England*, yet the Impartial World need not be told that this is not the first time that they have been making Rods for themselves. For let any one among them answer to this: If the Doctrines of *Jus Divinum*, of Passive Obedience, and of Non-resistance, Doctrines which they preach'd up with so much Earnestness, with so much Zeal, had pass'd upon the credulous Nation, where now had been the Clergy of the Church of *England*? 'Tis well they had wiser Men to take care of them, wiser I mean in the Affairs of the World; for in short they ought not to pry into Matters of State. They have an Employment of a larger Extent, and of a much nobler Consequence; and they must needs prove ill Politicians, if they are good Priests. But however, we have this Comfort at present, that there are two invincible Obstacles to the effecting of this Design. The one is the unblemish'd Honour of the Queen, the other the Honour of the approaching Parliament, in which I know there are so many Members of unalterable unshaken Principles; so many Members, to say all in a word, so exactly resembling your self, that no Consideration can e'er prevail upon them to break thro' so excellent a Constitution, and to betray the Trust reposed in them: I say, no Consideration can e'er prevail upon them to make the Majority of that People miserable, for whose Prosperity they were sent to consult; nor to establish an Inquisition in *England*, which may fall heavy upon their dearest Friends, nay and perhaps too upon themselves. For since no Man's Belief is within his

own power, they themselves may perhaps be hereafter involv'd in the Penalties which they ordain. Or if themselves should not be, their Posterity probably may ; and they are too considerate to give a just occasion to their Children or Grandchildren to curse their 'Memories for making a Law which must render their innocent Lives unhappy. Besides, they have Wisdom enough to know that no Opposition can stifle Truth, and that Indulgence is the surest and noblest Method of suppressing Error.

To conclude, I am very far from having any prejudice to the Church of *England*. I honour and esteem the moderate part of it, but cannot for my life esteem the violent in any Religion whatever. Nor can I think I am much to blame : For shall a little rakelly Parson be justly reputed scandalous for open Drunkenness and Fornication, and shall He be accounted venerable whose every Action shews want of Charity, which is downright Antichristian ? For this is plain, that Fornication and Drunkenness, tho crying Sins of themselves, yet are less damnable than Murder. Now being out of Charity is Murder, if we will believe *St. John*, 1 Epist. 3. 15. *Whosoever hateth his Brother is a Murderer*. The Reason is plain : He who hates his Brother would kill him, if he were not restrain'd by Law. For Mankind can have but two Restraints upon them, Religion and Law. But the Christian who hates his Brother is not restrain'd by Religion, because if he were, he would not hate him. Yet after all, the only Harm that I wish, even to the violent part of the Clergy, is, that like our Kings they may be restrain'd from the doing Mischief, and confin'd to the doing Good. I am,

S I R,

Yours, &c.

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